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IMPACT EVALUATION AND QUANTITATIVE POPULATION-BASED SURVEYS FOR USAID/MALI'S FEED THE FUTURE (FTF) CEREAL VALUE CHAIN (CVC) ACTIVITY

Contract Number: AID -688 -C-14- 00001

COR: Mr. Abdrahamane Dicko

QUARTERLY REPORT 3

October 2014 – December 2014

VERSION HISTORY

| Version # | Developed by | Date | Description |
|-----------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1.0 | IOS Partners, Inc. | January 8, 2015 | Draft Version |
| | | | |

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APPROVAL

We, the undersigned, acknowledge that we have reviewed the Third Quarterly Report presented in this document for *the Impact Evaluation and Quantitative Population-Based Surveys of USAID/Mali's Feed the Future (FTF) Cereal Value Chain (CVC) Activity* and hereby provide our approval.

Signature:

Date:

Print Name:

Title:

Role:

REMARKS AND OBSERVATIONS (if any):

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document was prepared by the team led by **IOS Partners, Inc.**, an international economic development consultancy firm, together with **Cultural Practice LLC (CP)**, **IOD PARC (IOD)**, **CARI-SARL** and **AFAR-TCT** for the **United States Agency for International Development (USAID)/Mali**. This document presents progress achieved during the reporting period and intends to serve as an important planning and coordination tool for the ongoing effort to provide the consulting services for ***Impact Evaluation and Quantitative Population-Based Surveys for USAID/Mali's Feed the Future (FTF) Cereal Value Chain (CVC) Activity***. The Project has been funded by the USAID.

We would like to express our appreciation for the excellent collaboration and facilitation of project documents and meetings, which we received from **the staff of USAID/Mali, USAID Mali's Monitoring and Evaluation Accelerated Economic Growth Team, the Government of Mali, and the CVC Activity implementer – the ACDI/VOCA team.**

DISCLAIMER

The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this document are entirely those of the authors and should not be attributed in any manner to the United States Agency for International Development. The United States Agency for International Development does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this document nor does it accept responsibility for any consequence of its use.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|------------------|---|
| ACDI/VOCA | Agriculture Cooperative Development International/Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance |
| COP | Chief Of Party |
| CVC | Cereal Value Chain |
| FTF | Feed The Future |
| G FORCE | Groupe de Formation Consultation et Etudes |
| IICEM | Initiatives intégrées pour la Croissance Economique au Mali |
| IR | Immediate Results |
| LVC | Livestock Value Chain |
| PBS | Population Based Survey |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |

1. PROGRAM OVERVIEW/SUMMARY

| | |
|--|--|
| Program Name: | Impact Evaluation and Quantitative Population-Based Surveys for USAID/Mali's Feed the Future (FTF) Cereal Value Chain (CVC) Activity |
| Activity Start Date and End Date: | March 7, 2014 – March 7, 2019 |
| Name of Prime Implementing Partner: | IOS Partners, Inc. |
| [Contract/Agreement] Number: | AID -688 -C-14- 00001 |
| Name of Subcontractors/Subawardees: | Cultural Practice LLC (CP), IOD PARC (IOD), CARI-SARL and AFAR-TCT |
| Major Counterpart Organizations | United States Agency for International Development (USAID)/Mali |
| Geographic Coverage (cities and or countries) | Bamako, Mali |
| Reporting Period: | October – December 2014 |

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The project for **Impact Evaluation and Quantitative Population-Based Surveys for USAID/Mali's Feed the Future (FTF) Cereal Value Chain (CVC) Activity** aims to: **a) undertake an impact evaluation of the CVC Activity;** and **b) conduct statistically representative population based surveys (PBS)** for the indicators within the broader FTF initiative in Mali. These activities will provide information and data to support future programmatic decisions and help meet Mali's FTF reporting requirements. This intervention will capture the value of USAID's investments in Mali and assess the effectiveness of USAID's value chain approach as a driver for inclusive economic development, allowing for more effective resource allocation and better targeted management decisions.

The FTF strategy in Mali uses a value chain approach to increase economic opportunities and focuses development interventions on three core value chains: sorghum/millet, rice, and livestock. These three value chains are key to Mali's development and overall food security as the majority of the population relies directly upon these staple foods for their livelihood and food security.

FTF has an overall goal of sustainably reducing global poverty and hunger. This goal will be achieved through two inter-related objectives of (1) inclusive agriculture growth, and (2) improved nutritional status, especially of women and children. The following are the Immediate Results (IRs) that USAID/Mali has identified to be necessary for achieving these objectives and overall FTF goal.

Objective 1: Inclusive Agriculture Growth

IR 1: Improved Agricultural Productivity

IR 2: Expanding Markets and Trade

IR 3: Increased Private Sector Investment in Agriculture and Nutrition Related Activities

IR 4: Increased Resilience of Vulnerable Communities and Households (also contributes to objective 2)

Objective 2: Improved Nutritional Status, Especially of Women and Children

IR 1: Increased Resilience of Vulnerable Communities and Households
IR 2: Improved Access to Diverse and Quality Foods
IR 3: Improved Nutrition Related Behavior
IR 4: Increased Utilization of High Impact Services and Healthy Behaviors

There are two main projects under the FTF initiative: the Cereal Value Chain (CVC) Project and the Livestock Value Chain (LVC) Project.

IOS Partners is responsible for the impact evaluation of the Cereal Value Chain project (CVC). The CVC Project is a five-year initiative that aims to sustainably reduce poverty and hunger in target intervention areas. The CVC will promote the integrated, women-empowering, and inclusive development of the sorghum/millet and rice value chains and will contribute to strengthening resilience of vulnerable communities and populations. The project is composed of a core award – called “CVC Activity” - fashioned after the previous USAID IICEM project as well as complementary value chain interventions.

The CVC Activity focuses on key interventions necessary for value chain integration and competitiveness such as production, research and technology dissemination, marketing, processing, trade, finance, capacity building and elements of policy reform. Key aspects of the implementation approach will include:

- capacity building across an array of business development services and agricultural production skills;
- strengthening of relationships among value chain actors and support services and assisted coordination; and
- Facilitation of the value chain approach for other interventions implemented by other implementers under the broader CVC Project, and promoting an enabling environment necessary for long-term competitiveness.

CVC’s mandate is to target up to 113 FTF communes in Sikasso, Segou, Mopti and Timbuktu. In Sikasso and Mopti, CVC began its activities in those communes closest to the regional capitals. In Segou, CVC together with G-FORCE and Nyeta Conseils has begun working in both target communes immediately.

Activities in northern Mopti and Timbuktu will be timed to begin once the security situation permits.

2. ACTIVITY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

PROGRESS NARRATIVE

Numerous activities took place during the third quarter of this project. A summary of the activities is found below:

| October 2014 | November 2014 | December 2014 |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Introduction of new team members to Mali project •Organization and finalization of new financial and administrative procedures in IOS Mali office •Completion of PBS data entry into the data base by IOS Partners and subcontractor SABINE •Revision and re-evaluation of the Impact Evaluation Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •IOS team's meeting with USAID •Completion and submission of Quarterly Report 2 and related trip reports to USAID | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Meetings and talks held with project stakeholders - USAID and ACDI/VOCA with regards to the Impact Evaluation •Production and submission of the first draft of the new Impact Evaluation Plan •Submission of the first draft of the PBS data collection report | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Presentation of the results and conclusions obtained during the PBS survey to USAID •Finalization of the PBS report taking into account USAID comments during the presentation and in writing. •Finalization of the Impact Evaluation taking into accounts USAID comments. •Transfer of datasets and codes to USAID database •Preparation for the 2015 budget and workplan |

As seen above, the third quarter of this project has primarily focused on the completion of the PBS survey for 2014.

Meanwhile, the IOS Partners team has taken a step back to re-evaluate its previously-submitted plan for the impact evaluation following the set of comments presented by USAID in September.

With the introduction of several new key members of staff, including the new Impact Evaluation Expert Emily Andrews, a new plan has been prepared, which takes into account new knowledge acquired from ACDI/VOCA and USAID on the latest situation and the local context. The main description of the Impact Evaluation and its related objectives were presented through various presentations and meetings with the project stakeholders in Bamako with the aim of getting everyone to understand the concept of the impact evaluation.

The end of 2014 saw the finalization of the PBS Data Report and the Impact Evaluation Plan, the latter which will be used as a basis for preparing the sample size and sample groups for the quantitative and qualitative analysis expected to take place in 2015, after the harvest period ends.

3. KEY ACTIVITIES DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD

➤ **Introduction of new team members to Mali project**

The month of October saw several additions to the IOS project team, including the new senior Impact Evaluation Expert – Ms. Emily Andrews and the local M&E Expert – Ms. Adizatou Maiga, who provided assistance for the PBS data entry and analysis and the production of the new Impact Evaluation Plan.

Meanwhile, Mr. Pedro Souss took over the role of the interim Chief of Party in mid-October. He remains also the primary I.T. expert of the project.

Ms. Rankica Cosic, Mr. Jean-Marc Bourreau and Mr. Sebastian Rossiter have also been added to the project team to assist the other key members in operational matters and to contribute to the development of the project deliverables and other technical areas of the project.

Mr. Moussa Traoré, the project Logistics Coordinator, also took over as Office Administrator to provide financial and administrative support to the project.

➤ **Organization and finalization of new financial and administrative procedures in IOS Mali office**

In October, new administrative and accounting procedures were introduced by IOS Partners to the Mali office. The aim of these new procedures was to improve and accelerate the recording of information within the IOS database and cloud-storage system.

These procedures were also introduced to facilitate communication between the Mali office and the IOS home office in Miami, enabling a quicker preparation of financial documents to be submitted to USAID on a monthly basis.

These procedures are in accordance with the USAID's Financial and Document Support compliances.

Some of these new procedures can be found in the IOS Partners Project and Policy Manuals for the Mali office.

Please see link <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7tq2RbuV5Fcc21XRkFRSjNYYms/view?usp=sharing> to access **Project and Policy Manual**.

In addition new forms and procedures have been created to aid IOS administratively. Link to **forms and procedures** here:

<https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=0B7tq2RbuV5FcbkRVVDRuMzJnQ1U&usp=sharing>

➤ **Completion of PBS data entry into the data base by IOS Partners and subcontractor SABINE**

In October, IOS and the subcontractor SABINE – hired for the implementation of the PBS survey – completed the data entry and data cleansing process for the PBS. The data found within the questionnaires that were distributed and filled out by the surveyors in the field while questioning the households were manually inputted into the IOS database by members of SABINE. The data was then cleansed so as to be subsequently analyzed by the IOS project team, who would go on to explain the results in the PBS baseline report and presentation to USAID.

Meanwhile, SABINE completed and submitted the final report summarizing the data collection process.

Please follow link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwTZefsxUYI-cF9LaUVEMF9TQU0/view?usp=sharing> to access **Sabine's Final Report.**

In addition, please find below links to the Database and Data Entry Software, including the source code.

To access database, please see link below:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwTZefsxUYI-eXRWSmFJVkVrYUE/view?usp=sharing>

To access datasets, please see link below:

https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=0B_RPzcbzPOS5VDMzLW9hR3hoUIU&usp=sharing

To access dataset labels, please see link below:

https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=0B_RPzcbzPOS5eHZXVHgXWmYzT1k&usp=sharing

➤ **IOS team's meeting with USAID (October 27th, 2014)**

On October 27th, 2014, Mr. Abdrahamane Dicko and Ms. Marika Olson of USAID came to the IOS office in Bamako to meet the new IOS team members. The COP Mr. Pedro Souss gave a presentation, introducing the new team members and listing the next steps that would be undertaken by IOS in November and December. The principal aim of this meeting was to ensure that USAID were kept informed of the new changes in personnel as well as kept updated on the deliverables that IOS was charged with delivering in November and December.

The agenda of the presentation included the following:

- Introduction of IOS Partners, Inc.
- Recap of General Objectives of the Program
- New members of the IOS Mali Team
- Key Project Deliverables and Schedule
- PBS Activities
- CVC Impact Evaluation Activities

Please follow link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwTZefsxUYI-MlIZTzJEVUNNU0U/view?usp=sharing> to access the PowerPoint presentation.

➤ **Completion and submission of Quarterly Report 2 and related trip reports (for July, August, September 2014) to USAID**

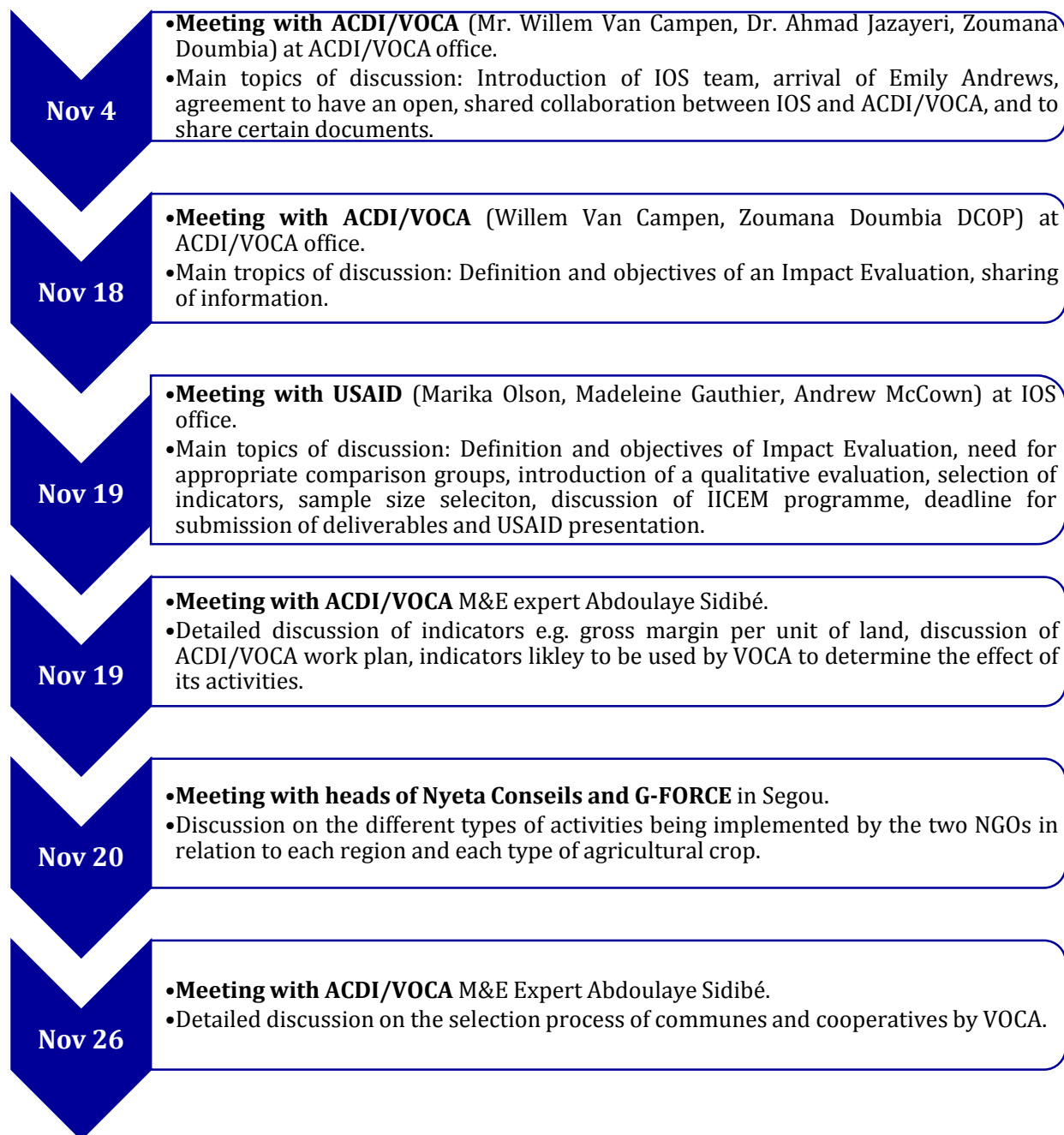
In October, all key staff members who travelled in July, August or September either to or from Mali, or within Mali for project purposes, recorded their activities in individual trip reports. These trip reports were submitted to USAID in conjunction with the Second Quarterly Report.

The Second Quarterly Report, summarizing the principal activities that had occurred between July and September 2014, was submitted on October 31st, 2014 to USAID and is still awaiting formal approval.

➤ **Meetings and talks held with project stakeholders USAID and ACDI/VOCA with regards to the Impact Evaluation**

In the month of November, the following meetings were held between IOS team members and the project stakeholders (Figure 1).

Figure 1 – IOS Partners' November meetings with project stakeholders



These meetings focused on either obtaining information on the project activities to be used to develop the impact evaluation plan or on explaining how an impact evaluation must be implemented while listing the key requirements to successfully conduct an accurate and reliable impact evaluation.

The IOS team met with members of ACDI/VOCA in November to gather additional information on the project activities and to establish and maintain a more consistent stream of communication with their monitoring and evaluation experts in particular.

In November, IOS Partners learned that ACDI/VOCA were in the middle of further contractual negotiations and discussions with USAID on which indicators to use to identify the effect of their activities as well as which cooperatives and communes would be chosen for the second year of the project activities.

Some important points on the selection method of cooperatives and the number of households chosen were explained by the ACDI/VOCA M&E Expert. These observations were important and would have an effect on the selection of the comparison groups and samples that had to be determined by IOS for the impact evaluation.

➤ **Visit to Ségou to meet with the directors of the NGOs Nyeta Conseils and G-FORCE**

In addition to meetings in Bamako, IOS Partners went to Ségou to meet with the directors of the NGOs Nyeta Conseils and G-FORCE, who provided the team with an extensive overview of the activities performed by them. They also helped clarify certain aspects of the FTF programme and the organizational structure incorporating ACDI/VOCA, the NGOs and the other public and private institutions who have collaborated with the households and farming cooperatives in the zone of influence.

During the trip to Ségou, the team also made several stops to examine millet crops and cotton weighing.



IOS Partners' experts in the field



Cotton farmers in Ségou region

Source: Photographs by Al Gillespie

➤ **PBS Data Collection Report: Preparation and Submission of the First Draft**

Using the outline of the PBS report, which had been presented in the Second Quarterly Report to USAID, the cleansed data was put into graphs and the project team began analyzing the data in preparation for the development of PBS report.

On November 29th, the first draft of the PBS Data Collection Report (baseline) was submitted to USAID.

This report used a similar template to the recent PBS baseline report produced for Ghana. It provided a brief summary of the methodology used for calculating the methodology and the identification of the households surveyed. Furthermore, it explained the methods used for designing and implementing the survey and finally presented the results of the data obtained once cleansed.

Some of the principal data results collected concerned:

- Per capita expenditure and poverty
- Women's anthropometry
- Women's dietary diversity
- Children malnutrition
- Children anthropometry
- Household hunger scale
- Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) (not yet completed in the first draft)

This first draft had some incomplete sections, which required feedback from USAID before completing, such as WEAI.

Please follow link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwTZefsxUYI-Vm1Wd05mRW1wd0E/view?usp=sharing> to access a WORKING version of the **PBS Data Collection Report (First Draft)**.

On December 19th, 2014, Mr. Abdrahamane Dicko provided IOS via e-mail the *initial comments* on the report from Mrs. Madeleine Gauthier. It was informed by Mr. Dicko that further comments would be shared by other members of USAID's Economic Growth office.

➤ **Presentation of the PBS results and conclusions to USAID**

The presentation of the PBS baseline results took place at the USAID office in Bamako on the 1st of December, 2014 at 2:00 pm in line with the Scope of Work as follows "4. Presentation of midterm data collection findings: *the findings of the midterm data collection will be presented in French to stakeholders in Mali, including the CVC and LVC implementers.*"

Participants:

- IOS Team – Mr. Pedro Souss, Mr. Oumar Malé, Mr. Stuart Astil, Mrs. Emily Andrews, Mrs. Masa Cosic, Mr. Sebastian Rossiter, Ms. Adizatou Maiga.
- Ms. Marika Olson, Mr. David Yanggen and Ms. Alima Ouattara - Economic Growth Office of USAID.

The presentation contained the following sections (titles in French):

- Presentation des Participants
- Objectif du PBS
- Objectif de la présentation
- Méthodologie et déroulement
- Taille de l'échantillon
- Calcul de la taille de l'échantillon
- Presentation des résultats
- A propos des données FTF
- Questions

The IOS Partners team presented the principal PBS results in graph form of the main indicators listed in the report, such as per capital expenditure and poverty. The client asked several questions about the methodology but their questions principally related to the significance of the graphs.

One of the main recommendations for the IOS team was to make the graphs easier to read with footnotes explaining the more technical statistical terms. The suggestions made during the presentation were taken into account and will have been incorporated together with the improvements made following comments

in writing from the USAID evaluator for the final version of the PBS report to be submitted in January 2015.

Please follow link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwTZefsxUYI-VnNoMl84dWM5MWM/view?usp=sharing> to access the **PBS PowerPoint Presentation**.

➤ **Revision of the Impact Evaluation Plan**

After receiving feedback and a long list of comments back on the first version of the Impact Evaluation Plan in September 2014, the IOS project team felt it was necessary to take a step back and revise the way in which the team would go about conducting the impact evaluation. IOS Partners brought in some new key members to re-examine the methodology of the proposed impact evaluation. In addition, the previous version of the Impact Evaluation Plan was discarded and a new plan was produced from scratch in an effort to start over fresh. Some key elements of the previous version were kept and moved to the new version.

Before commencing on the write-up of the new impact evaluation plan, much preliminary research was done on impact evaluations that had taken place previously in other similar projects.

Key details and information were noted by the Impact Evaluation Expert Ms. Emily Andrews who had in turn requested a trip to Mali in November in order to better understand the Feed the Future project and the activities being implemented by ACDI/VOCA, before wanting to submit a new Impact Evaluation plan.

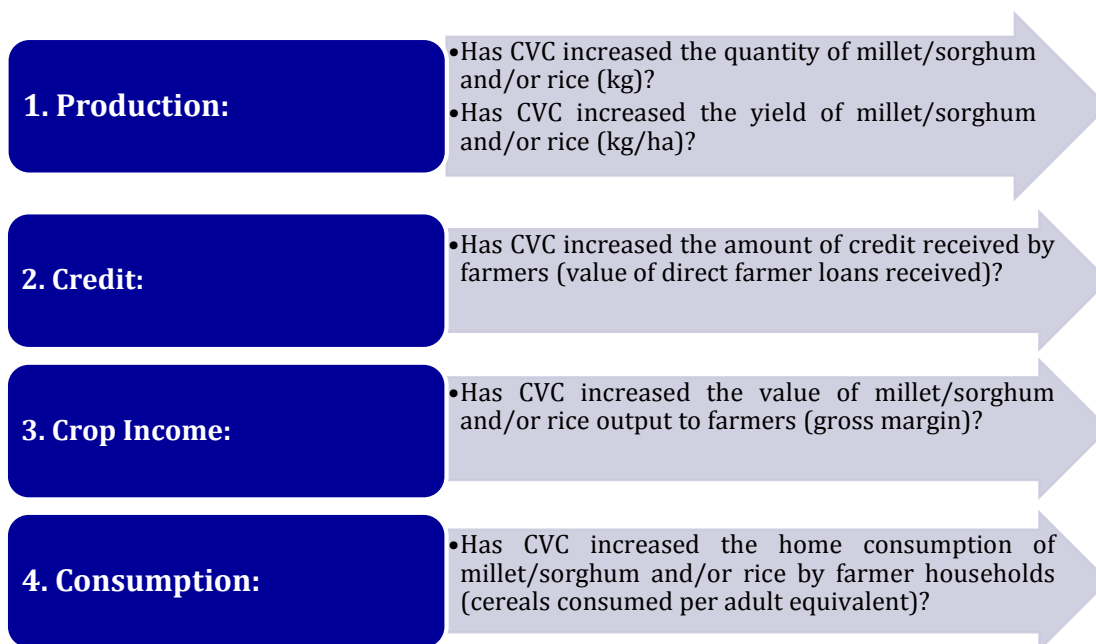
Using all the information acquired through desk research, interviews with project stakeholders and a trip to the field, the IOS Partners team was able to produce a new draft of the Impact Evaluation Plan. It was submitted together with the PBS baseline report and the PBS draft PowerPoint Presentation on Saturday 29th of November, 2014.

The Impact Evaluation Plan included explanations and descriptions of the following key details:

- Definition of questions and indicators
- Assessment of size of impact
- Selection of treatment and comparison groups
- Calculation of sample sizes
- Development of survey instruments and implementation

In this plan, IOS proposed a mixed-methods approach, which includes a quasi-experimental evaluation design. The quantitative evaluation (impact evaluation) will look at the following key indicators and questions over the five-year period:

Figure 2 – Evaluation indicators and questions



To summarize the plan, IOS proposes to have both the treatment and comparison groups for the impact evaluation within the zone of influence. However, the comparison group must be one that is not affected by the CVC activities until year 5 of the project. Therefore, IOS will be able to measure indicators for certain households who are affected by CVC in year 1 (treatment group) with households who do not receive assistance from CVC (comparison group) or will only do so in year 5.

Please follow link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwTZefsxUYI-XzFOZFRiM1J5RFk/view?usp=sharing> to access WORKING version of the **Impact Evaluation Plan**.

On December, 19 2014, Mr. Abdrahamane Dicko provided via e-mail the *initial comments* of the report from Mrs. Madeleine Gauthier. It was informed by Mr. Dicko that further comments would be shared by other members of USAID's Economic Growth office.

➤ **Preparation for the 2015 budget and work plan**

In December, the IOS team began preparing the budget and work plan for 2015 taking into account the changes made in the new Impact Evaluation Plan submitted to USAID. Final versions of the revised 2015 work plan will be submitted sometime in January 2015 (fourth quarter of the project).

4. SUBMITTED DELIVERABLES

Second Quarterly Report

The second quarterly report was submitted on October 31st to USAID. IOS Partners is still awaiting formal approval of this deliverable by USAID.

Trip Reports

The trip reports for Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 have been submitted along with the respective quarterly reports. The trip reports for Quarter 3 include:

- Mr. Pedro Souss's trip report
link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwTZefsxUYI-R0pza01CckQxRVE/view?usp=sharing>
- Ms. Emily Andrews trip report
link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwTZefsxUYI-WHlncjVEc3I4dm8/view?usp=sharing>
- Mr. Sebastian Rossiter trip report
link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwTZefsxUYI-M1o1TEs4aEN4MUk/view?usp=sharing>
- and the local trip report to Ségou for the IOS Evaluation team
link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwTZefsxUYI-RmZfR2pNSnJKX2s/view?usp=sharing>

Impact Evaluation Plan

The first draft of the new Impact Evaluation Plan was submitted on November 29th, 2014. USAID sent back the Impact Evaluation Plan with comments from Madeleine Gauthier on December 19th, 2014. IOS Partners is working on incorporating the suggestions or answering the questions posed by Ms. Gauthier while waiting for any other comments from the USAID team. A definitive version of the plan will be submitted in January 2015.

PBS Baseline Data Collection Report

The first draft of the PBS Baseline Data Collection Report was submitted on November 29th, 2014. USAID sent back the Report with comments from Madeleine Gauthier on December 19th, 2014. IOS Partners is working on incorporating the suggestions or answering the questions posed by Ms. Gauthier while waiting for any other comments from the USAID team. A definitive version of the Report will be submitted in January 2015.

PBS Results Presentation

The presentation of the PBS results took place on December 1st, 2014 at the USAID office in Bamako. Comments made by USAID have been incorporated into the new draft of the PBS report.

5. COMPLETED ACTIVITIES

Below is an overview and status of completed and ongoing activities undertaken by the IOS Team during the reporting period.

Work Activity 1 – Establish office and hire staff

All activities completed during the first quarter.

Work Activity 2 – Population Based Survey: Conduct statistically representative baseline population based survey (PBS) for the indicators within the broader FTF initiative in Mali.

All activities for the baseline survey completed during the second quarter. Data entry and data cleansing was done and completed in October 2014.

Work Activity 3 – Impact Evaluation: Provide evaluation services to objectively assess the impact of the CVC Activity in generating inclusive agriculture growth and improving the nutritional status, especially of women and children, in Mali.

The Impact Evaluation Plan was submitted in late November to USAID. Comments have been made by USAID and IOS is currently looking at responding to these comments.

Currently, the impact evaluation is in the initial stages of development as evaluation team attempts to work out crucial elements such as the selection of the communes and farmer cooperatives as well as the final list of indicators to be used to determine the expected impact. Once these are determined, the final samples and their sizes for the treatment and comparison groups will be chosen in line with the planned budget.

Work Activity 5 – Survey Reporting: Present results of Surveys to USAID and CVC, and at their request and with their permission, to other USAID project and USG activities, and others as USAID desires.

For the PBS, the results of the survey were presented to USAID in a PowerPoint Presentation held on December 1st. In addition, these results were presented in writing in the PBS baseline data collection report submitted on November 29th. A revised version of this report, incorporating USAID comments, will be submitted in January.

For the Impact Evaluation, no surveys have taken place as of yet. Therefore, no results could be presented to USAID and CVC.

Please see below the Gantt chart (Figure 4) with a detailed list of all completed activities during the reporting period.

Figure 3 – Project Gantt Chart

| No. | ACTIVITY | MONTHS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|--|--------|-----|------|------|--------|-----------|---------|----------|----------|----------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | April | May | June | July | August | September | October | November | December | Deliverable name/Task name | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Activity 1- Establish Office and hire staff | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1.1 | Temporary project office opened in Bamako | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1.2 | 4 key staff for project hired | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1.3. | Rental of short term vehicle | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1.4 | Financial arrangements with Ecobank | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1.5 | Relocate office to permanent location | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1.6 | Hire additional 2 Key staff (M&E and Gender specialist) and support staff (driver, security) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1.7 | Purchase 1 vehicle | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1.8 | Purchase office equipment and furnishings | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | Activity 2 - Population Based Survey | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2.1 | Define key indicators using USAID framework and implementing partner indicators to develop list of PBS survey questions | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2.2 | Define type of household for survey questions based on target population for FTF activities, and generate list of survey | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

6. IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

Potential Challenges and Solutions

Table 1 - Potential Challenges and Mitigating Solutions

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Challenge | Changes in the security situation |
| Solution | Given the recent security concerns in Mali, the oversight teams and the local experts will evaluate evolving security issues as necessary, including communicating with implementers to ensure that safety is a priority. With CVC postponing interventions in the Timbuktu area, much of the security problem has been minimized. |
| Challenge | Ebola virus threat |
| Solution | The threat of the Ebola virus in Mali has not been severe enough to affect the implementation of the project. Increased security at the airport has been the only potential change, having an effect on the flight paths of overseas experts returning home. |
| Challenge | Internet outages |
| Solution | The PBS was undertaken solely by paper questionnaire to eliminate this concern. Data entry was undertaken in IOS offices with power backup in case internet went down for a prolonged period. However, internet will be a concern when using tablets for the CVC and mini surveys. Backup data storage will be required. |
| Challenge | Ensuring data quality and appropriate responses to survey questions |
| Solution | Field supervisors oversaw interviewers to control quality. This included ensuring that interviewers do not abuse local knowledge and report results based on pre-supposed knowledge. Supervisors evaluated at least 10% of households interviewed in order to ensure validity of reported results. IOS imposed a field supervisor for the PBS to ensure that quality control was implemented by the survey company supervisors and that high quality data was obtained. |
| Challenge | Selection of treatment and counterfactual groups for the impact evaluation |
| | In order to accurately perform an impact evaluation as defined, USAID, ACDI/VOCA and IOS Partners must agree on the treatment group and counterfactual group for the impact evaluation and ensure they are well-defined. The counterfactual group must be one where the communes chosen have remained unaffected by CVC activities at least until year 5 while the treatment group has been involved in CVC activities as of year 1 of the project. If this cannot be guaranteed, other types of quantitative evaluations can be used. |

7. INTEGRATION OF CROSSCUTTING ISSUES AND USAID FORWARD PRIORITIES

GENDER EQUALITY AND FEMALE EMPOWERMENT

In early September, IOS Partners submitted requests for approval for the short-term technical assistance of Ms. Adizatou Maiga (Monitoring and Evaluation expert), Ms. Emily Andrews (Monitoring and Evaluation expert), Ms. Tea Alania (Project Manager) and Ms. Masa Cosic (Research & Quality Control Specialist) to assist and provide support on the PBS data collection and cleansing as well as the development of the Impact Evaluation Plan and the general management and administration of this project.

In October, the requests for approval for the short-term assistance of Ms. Masa Cosic, Ms. Tea Alania, Ms. Emily Andrews and Ms. Adizatou Maiga were accepted and each of these members were brought on to assist with the completion of the PBS Data Report and the development of the new Impact Evaluation Plan.

Ms. Adizatou Maiga is a local Monitoring & Evaluation expert who contributed to the production of the PBS Data Collection Report and played a major part in the presentation of the data to USAID in early December. She has much experience working with NGOs in Mali and her large amount of contacts and knowledge of the local context will prove vital during the initiation and implementation of the impact evaluation among the various communes.

Ms. Emily Andrews, the senior Evaluator of the team has contributed a large part to the rethinking and revision of the new Impact Evaluation Plan. Her expertise in the field of evaluation along with her trip to Bamako and Ségou, in particular, enabled the team to think more out of the box and come up with an impact evaluation plan that is hoped to be both more sensible and realistic. Her previous work with MCC and her numerous contacts in USAID also helped to establish a better rapport between IOS and the other project stakeholders.

Continuous contributions from Ms. Tea Alania and Ms. Masa Cosic have provided crucial support in the form of quality control and backstopping. They also bring vital knowledge in the field of data management, administration, finance and project management.

Lastly, Ms. Taisiya Merkulola, a statistician, has been assisting the team with organizing the data for the PBS and displaying this data through the form of various graphs, which have been used in the PBS baseline report and the PowerPoint presentation to USAID.

LOCAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

While no formal training took place this year, the local staff was able to benefit from in-house training in the use of Cloud (Google Drive) for file storage and organization. In addition, the IOS Mali office Logistics officer and administrator was trained in how to effectively record financial transactions and use Excel for accounting and administration purposes.

Our senior Evaluation expert Emily Andrews was also able to provide some interesting insight and expert knowledge in the field of evaluations, especially concerning impact evaluations, through the sharing of many peer-reviewed scholarly articles.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION IMPACTS

The PBS survey utilized GPS instruments in identifying households that are being surveyed for future reference.

For the Impact Evaluation survey that is expected to take place in the first quarter of 2015, the evaluation team and the local surveyors are expected to learn how to use tablets for the entering of data in questionnaires, which holds a special software solution to easy the questioning process.

Electronic questionnaires are developed in French. The software solution offers a simplified function for data entry developed with open source tool ODK. It has the same appearance as the data collection paper forms used by the staff in the field. With each interface, there are clear instructions for the data population. Our software data entry solution is being used to capture all paper questionnaires. This software solution provides for full editing, validation of reports, double entry capture and a centralized database that is backed up in the cloud every day. The APPS solutions run on a Samsung Tablet and they are connected to the cloud database provided by the Google Apps Engine Solution.

8. PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR NEXT QUARTER INCLUDING UPCOMING EVENTS

The principal activities that will be undertaken for the next quarter and a timeframe of their implementation from December 2014 to March 2015 are presented below.

- **Work Activity 3 – Impact Evaluation: Provide evaluation services to objectively assess the impact of the CVC Activity in generating inclusive agriculture growth and improving the nutritional status, especially of women and children, in Mali.**

The figure below summarizes the process that the evaluation team will follow in the first half of 2015 to carry out the impact evaluation baseline survey.

Figure 4 – 2015 Impact Evaluation Timeline

